

Washington, DC - Today, Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) will proudly join his House colleagues in voting to pass several key measures for our veterans, including bills to ensure advance funding for veterans programs and expand health care services for women, especially those have served bravely in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“We think of our veterans on July 4th and Memorial Day, and raise our flags to salute their service,” said Cong. Quigley. “But these individuals need our support and our thanks year-round. This package of legislation will make it easier for veterans to get the services they deserve every day.”

Veterans Affairs (VA) Department budgets are often late, due to a rationing of health care between new veterans who are returning home and aging veterans from previous generations who are in need of care. The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act (H.R. 1016) will ensure sufficient and predictable veterans funding by authorizing appropriations for the VA Department medical care programs one year in advance. This will provide time for the VA to plan how to deliver the best quality of care to an increasing number of veterans with increasingly complex medical conditions. The bill has been endorsed by a coalition of eleven veteran service organizations who have indicated this issue to be amongst the most important to their members and families.*

The Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act (H.R. 1211) will expand and improve VA health care services for the 1.8 million women who have bravely served their country. An ever-increasing population, today women represent 7% of the nearly 25 million US veterans. This number is expected to double in the next five years.

“Returning home after serving our country in the military and adjusting back to life is not an easy thing,” added Cong. Quigley. “These courageous men and women have fought for the values that define our country, and our country owes them support – not red tape – in return.”

On Monday of this week, Cong. Quigley hosted a veterans service fair at home in Chicago. More than 200 veterans attended the event, where they were able to seek advice and get assistance with employment counseling, education benefits, health benefits, and veterans support group services. Earlier that day, Cong. Quigley spoke at an event hosted by Easter Seals and the McCormick Foundation dedicated to job creation and training for veterans.

Further description and links to the bills mentioned above, as well as additional efforts to support veterans, are below:

- H.R. 1016, as amended – Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009 (Filner). H.R. 1016 would authorize Congress to approve VA medical care appropriations one year in advance of the start of each fiscal year. The bill provides Congress greater ability and incentive to develop appropriation bills that provide sufficient funding to meet the best estimate of anticipated demand for VA health care services in future years. H.R. 1016

- H.R. 1211, as amended – Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act (Herseth Sandlin). The bill would expand and improve health care services available to women veterans, especially those serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The bill requires the VA to conduct a comprehensive study on barriers encountered by women veterans when attempting to access the VA health care system, an assessment of women's health care programs, medical care for newborn children of women veterans, enhancement of VA sexual trauma programs, enhancement of PTSD treatment for women, establishment of a pilot program for child care services, and the addition of recently separated women veterans to serve on advisory committees.. H.R. 1211
- H.R. 1172, as amended – To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include on the Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs a list of organizations that provide scholarships to veterans and their survivors. (Boozman). This bill would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include on the Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs a list of organizations that provide scholarships to veterans and their survivors and, for each such organization, a link to their Internet website. H.R. 1172
- S. 407 – Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2009 (Akaka). S. 407 would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase, as of December 1, 2009, the rates of veterans' disability compensation to be the same percentage as the increase in benefits provided under title II of the Social Security Act. S. 407

* A .pdf of this support letter is available upon request.